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D. S. Department of Agriculture
Interview between W. R. Beattie and F. L. Mulford, horticulturists,
Bureau of Plant Industry, broadcast Thursday, March 20, 10 a.m., by Station
WRC.

Last week in our Timely Garden Suggestions, we discussed the making of new lawns, and the renovation of old ones. The weather for the past few days has been exceptionally favorable for work on the lawn, and at the rate that everything is beginning to grow, it is time that all work of this character should be completed.

Today, Mr. F. L. Mulford, Landscape Specialist of the Department of Agriculture, is joining me in a discussion of the best methods of growing outdoor roses. In that connection, let me mention that we have a Farmers' Bulletin on that subject, the title of which is "Roses for the Home," and the number of this bulletin is 7 - 5 - 0. Mr. Mulford wrote this bulletin away back in 1916, but it has been revised on several occasions. The late Edwin T. Meredith, former Secretary of Agriculture, in his greeting to the "American Rose Society," in 1920 used these words:

"No decorative plant has been more closely identified with the progress of western civilization than the Rose. It is an insignia alike of joy, of sorrow, of love, and of war. It is the flower beloved by all. Certainly those who contribute in any way to the propagation, development, and culture of the Rose are adding much to the joys and beauties of life."

I could go on indefinitely quoting both poetry and prose in praise of the rose, but in the short time at our disposal today, we want to discuss a few of the important, practical points in the growing of outdoor roses.

Now, Mr. Mulford is right here at my elbow, and I want him to say a word to you at this time. -

MR. MULFORD: Good morning, rose lovers. Now is the time to plant roses, but first I want to remind you that any winter protection that you may have about your rose plants should be removed, and your bush roses should be pruned. The climbing roses will need their pruning just as soon as they are through flowering. The hybrid tea roses, such as Radiance, Killarney, and Mme. Butterfly should be cut back to a foot high or less, if you want fine blooms with long stems. The hybrid perpetuals such as Frau Karl Druschki and Paul Neyron should be cut back to about 15 or 18 inches high.

W. R. B. You say it is time to plant roses, but what points should be considered in selecting a suitable location for roses?

MR. MULFORD: Roses need plenty of sunlight without the competition of shade or roots of other plants. It will not be a serious detriment if they are shaded for a little while during the day, but full sunshine is better, and they must be well protected from wind.

A good, deep, clay loam soil is best, although the hybrid teas do well on a rich, clay soil. Soil that is sandy can be improved for roses by an admixture of clay. In any case the soil needs to be well drained, but should be retentive of moisture. Enough space should be allowed to place the tea and hybrid tea roses 24 inches apart, and the hybrid perpetuals 36 inches apart. If a suitable location is available then the plants should be ordered at once so that the planting may be done as soon as possible.

W. R. B. How about varieties of roses for planting around Washington, D.C., Mr. Mulford?

MR. MULFORD: There are 3 main types of cut-flower roses. Hybrid perpetuals give a large number of blooms in the spring and many varieties give scattering flowers during the balance of the season. All of them grow vigorously and are hardy. Hybrid tea roses flower all through the summer, but are weak growers and many of them are quite tender so that 9 out of 10 varieties are not satisfactory. Tea roses are less robust in growth and are not quite so hardy, but are comparable with the hybrid tea roses in the number and quality of blooms they produce. They are probably better for light soils than the hybrid teas.

W. R. B. How about Radiance - I get fine results in my garden from Radiance?

MR. MULFORD: Radiance is probably the most satisfactory of the cut-flower roses - is a constant blooming hardy pink. Other good pinks are Mrs. Wakefield Christie Miller, La Tosca, and Maman Cochet, while all the Killarneys, both pink and white, are good although they do not keep as long as many others, because they are not so nearly double, but they are sweet scented which adds much to their attractiveness. Good reds are Red Radiance, Laurent Carle, and Gruss an Teplitz. Good whites in addition to the Killarneys are White Maman Cochet and Kaiserin Augusta Victoria. A copper colored one is Mrs. A. R. Waddell, while Ophelia and Duchess of Wellington are two other roses with copper and pink shades that thrive almost as well as the other varieties mentioned. Unfortunately, there is no real yellow that can be relied upon to give satisfaction.

W. R. B. Which do you prefer Mr. Mulford, roses that are grown on their own roots or those that are grafted or budded?

MR. MULFORD: As purchased from reliable nurseries, there is little choice between roses grown on their own roots and those that are grafted or budded. The grafted or budded roses have to be watched to prevent sprouts growing from the roots and robbing the desired top of its needed sustenance so that it soon dies and only the undesirable root is left. They may grow a little more vigorously the first 2 or 3 years, especially those varieties that are poor growers. For the average home owner the own-root plants are probably the most satisfactory in the long run.

W. R. B. What size should rose plants be for setting in the rose garden:

MR. MULFORD: Roses are listed by rose nurserymen as 1, 2, and 3 - year old plants. The one-year old plants need nursing along for a year before they are ready for blooming. This is probably most satisfactorily done in a special bed the first summer, the plants being set in the permanent bed the last of October. The 2-year old plants are ready to be put in the permanent rose bed and give satisfactory results. The 3-year old plants are still larger, but give little better results than the 2-year old plants.

W.R.B. After the roses are ordered, what about the preparation of the soil, Mr. Mulford? What is of most importance?

MR. MULFORD: Fertility is of first importance. The best fertilizer is dairy-barn manure, but this is almost impossible to obtain. Prepared stockyard cattle manure is next best with bone meal to supplement it. The cattle manure should be used at the rate of 1 or 2 pounds per square foot, and the bone meal one-half pound per square foot. The fertilizers should be spaded into the soil and be thoroughly mixed with it. A good rose bed has 10 to 12 inches of good top soil over a subsoil that is not impervious. Soils having a very tight or impervious subsoil will require some form of drainage. Where an outlet can be secured, the best method is to lay a line of open jointed tile at a depth of 24 to 30 inches underneath the rose bed. Before the earth is returned to the trench in which the tile is laid, 4 or 5 inches of gravel or coarse cinders should be placed over the tile in order to keep it working and prevent the joints from clogging. In some cases the drainage may be improved by simply breaking up the subsoil with a spade. In other cases, the subsoil may be thrown out and stones or coarse cinders mixed in the bottom of the bed to make the subsoil more porous. Great care must be taken, however, that you do not simply create a tank or cistern underneath your plants where the water will accumulate and ruin them. That is why we recommend that a tile be used and that it discharge at some lower point - perhaps in the gutter. This question of drainage is important for any crop, but especially so with roses. With the bed drained, the ground well worked over, and the fertilizer applied and mixed with the soil, your rose bed will be ready for the arrival of the plants.

W.R.B. Suppose your rose plants should arrive before the ground is ready for them, what would you do?

MR. MULFORD: If the roses should arrive before the ground is ready, then it is necessary to unpack them on arrival and heel them in, that is, place them in a trench with the roots all in contact with moist soil in such a way that there will be no danger of their drying out before planting. In taking the plants to the garden for setting, whether from the newly received package, or from the heeling-in ground, the roots should either be placed in a pail of soft mud or be wrapped in wet burlap to keep them from becoming dry before planting. The hole should be dug when the soil is dry enough, that is, when it will spring apart again after being squeezed together, instead of remaining in a sodden mass showing the imprints of the fingers. The holes should be larger across than the spread of the roots, and sufficiently deep so that own-root roses may be planted at the depth that they grew in the nursery, or grafted or budded roses may be planted

3 or 4 inches deeper than the union of stock and scion, that is, the swelling at the point of budding or grafting. By deep planting the growth of suckers from the roots is discouraged, besides new roots may form above the bud. Broken or mutilated roots should be cut off with a clean cut and then the plant should be placed in the hole. When the plant is properly located, earth should be worked around and over the roots in such a manner that there will be a good layer of soil between the different layers of roots, and then be well trampled with the feet or tamped with a tamper 3 or 4 inches across with all sharp edges removed. Ordinarily, no watering is required at this time, but it should be done later, if the weather remains dry.

W. R. B. How about pruning the newly set rose plants?

MR. MULFORD: As soon as set the bush should be cut back severely. All weak shoots should be cut out and in the case of 2-year old tea or hybrid tea roses, the remaining shoots should be cut back to about 6 inches in length and for hybrid perpetuals to 12 inches while a climber should not be permitted more than 2 shoots, each 2 feet long.

W. R. B. Another question I want to ask Mr. Mulford, and that is about handling roses that are already established, that is, especially at this time of the year.

MR. MULFORD: An established rose garden should have a liberal application of fertilizer at this time. If stockyard cattle manure is used, a pound to each square foot of surface, and one-fourth of a pound of ^{ground}~~bone~~ should be applied. These should be broadcast and be worked into the soil between the plants with the remains of the winter mulch. This should be done with a spading fork rather than with a spade, as a spade is more likely to cut the roots. The soil should be dug about 6 inches deep, but not so near the plants as to loosen their hold on the soil. Later cultivation should be gradually shallower and shallower through the season until the last cultivations only work an inch or two of the surface. During the season manure leachings may be applied every 2 weeks and be washed into the soil by a good watering. A substitute for this is an application of a pound of nitrate of soda to 800 square feet of garden. This may be applied dry or dissolved in water. In either case a thorough soaking should follow immediately.

W. R. B. How about watering roses, Mr. Mulford: I note that you say that they must have good soil drainage, but how about applying water to them, how should it be done: Is it best to sprinkle the plants rather frequently, or should some other method of watering be followed?

MR. MULFORD: Roses should be watered as infrequently as is practical to secure a constant growth. This ordinarily will mean watering at intervals of 5 days or a week when there is insufficient rainfall. They should be given enough water to penetrate the soil to a depth of 3 inches, but it should be given as slowly as possible to give it a chance to soak in and not run off. Daily sprinkling is inadvisable as it simply wets the surface of the soil and encourages the roots to come up where they are more likely to be injured by dry weather. It is advisable not to wet the foliage any more frequently than can be helped, as wet foliage encourages the development of fungus diseases.

W. R. B. My roses make a pretty rank growth during the summer and I have found that it pays to prune them rather severely after each crop of flowers, what do you recommend:

MR. MULFORD: Roses should be cut with the stems as long as possible, that means cutting them close to the branch from which the bud has sprung, leaving one or at most two eyes on each shoot. New Growth will spring from these eyes that will give good long-stemmed roses if the plants are well fed. One of the reasons for the severe spring pruning is to encourage a continuous flowering after the first flush of bloom. By cutting the flowers with long stems, the result is practically the same as severe summer pruning. If the roses have not been severely pruned in the spring, one bud at the base of each flower stem is enough to leave, and if the bush is becoming overgrown, it may be desirable to cut back to the supporting stem without leaving any bud. Because of absence from home or other neglect, it sometimes occurs that the blooms are not cut as they mature so the bush becomes a thicket. Under such circumstances it is well to cut back the new growths severely in summer. This is likely to result in a good fall crop of flowers.

